



Reducing Tobacco Use Among Teenagers Through a Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program

Public Health Problem

In 2001, 39% of high school students in Minnesota used tobacco, which was higher than the national average of 35% for this age group. Of the 1,245,492 young people aged 17 or younger in Minnesota, more than 97,000 will die prematurely of a tobacco-related disease if current tobacco-use patterns persist.

Evidence That Prevention Works

Aggressive and comprehensive tobacco control programs in California, Florida, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Minnesota have produced substantial declines in cigarette use. Minnesota's multicomponent, statewide program has been in effect since 2000. In just 2 years, teen tobacco use in Minnesota has decreased by 11%.

Program Example

With resources from Minnesota's settlement with the tobacco industry, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) designed and manages the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Prevention Initiative. The goal of the Initiative is to reduce youth tobacco use by 30% by 2005. The Initiative is a comprehensive effort that includes competitive grant programs supporting (1) community-based grants to 31 local groups and 31 population-at-risk (PaR) groups; (2) statewide initiatives and development grants specifically designed to meet the technical assistance needs of community-based grantees in the areas of evaluation, communication, media advocacy, youth development, legal resources, school-based prevention, secondhand smoke policy development, and partnership development; and (3) a marketing campaign/youth advocacy organization (Target Market) designed to counter tobacco industry marketing efforts through public information and education. All recipients of community-based grants are provided strategic planning and general technical assistance through regional MDH grant managers. PaR grantees receive additional, specialized support through a statewide technical assistance grant designed to meet the strategic needs of PaRs. The Initiative aims to reach all youth aged 12–17 years, with an emphasis on those in middle school (aged 12–14 years).

Implications

When tobacco control programs are sustained over time, reductions in tobacco use occur. Reaching the 2005 goal will ultimately prevent 1,700 premature deaths and save \$480 million in health care costs every year in Minnesota. This program demonstrates the importance of implementing strategies that have been successful in other states and sharing best practices across states to ensure reductions in tobacco use among youth.

Contact Information

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